

Using the FamilySearch Catalog Effectively

Objective: At the end of this lesson, you should be able use the FamilySearch Catalog in your research.

The FamilySearch Catalog is one of the most important resources when conducting your family history research. The catalog provides you with information about the records, books, microfilm, microfiche, and computer databases available from FamilySearch.

To search the catalog, there are eight different types of search options that you can conduct. You can either search using single or multiple search options. This handout will cover all eight searches.

1. Places

One of the most frequently used searches is the **Places** search. This search is used to find records on different jurisdictional levels. These levels will change and vary dependent upon the country you are researching. The most common levels that you will find are **City, Town, County, State, Department, Province, and Country**. You may need to check all jurisdictional levels when searching for records.

The **Places** search is an exact search. As you start to type, a dropdown box appears and tries to predict the location you are entering. You must select the correct option in the dropdown menu for it to work.

EXERCISE: Search for the available records for **Messina, Messina, Italy**.

2. Surnames

The **Surnames** search is helpful in finding published family histories and other compiled works that include a specific surname. This search works best if you have an uncommon surname. For common surnames like Jones, Smith or Williams the **Keywords** search works better. It also does not include surname variants. When searching for surnames and family histories, try searching other variants.

EXCERISE: We are looking for the published works for the surname **Whittington**. We will also look at how to get access to a copy through InterLibrary Loan.

3. Titles

The **Titles** search is used to a collection in the title field. This includes any collection, not only a book. This search does not need to include the exact title.

EXERCISE: We want to know if the Family History Library has the book entitled **Ortsfamilienbuch, 1731-1922**.

4. Author

The **Author** search searches the authors field. The field may contain information about the book author, repository, or agency that created the collection.

EXERCISE: We want to find out if the library has any books authored by **William Bruce Turner**.

5. Subjects

The **Subjects** search searches through the subjects field. This search is based on the Library of Congress subjects: Native Races, Nationalities, Occupations, Religious Groups and Languages, World History, Geography, Political Science, Law, Fine Arts, Medicine, Military and Naval Science and more. This search may not always be successful.

EXERCISE: Find available information in the **Society of Friends** in Surrey England.

6. Keywords

The **Keywords** search is the most versatile search in the catalog. This search is not limited to a single field on the catalog page. It searches through the entire page searching your keywords. A Keyword search can help in locating authors, different subjects, and other sources when not all the words are known.

EXERCISE: We are searching for a census, called a **censo**, in **Peru**. We would like to know if FamilySearch has any information about Peru census records.

EXERCISE: We are searching for a farm book, called a **bygdebok**, in **Hvaler**, Norway. We would like to know what FamilySearch has available.

7. Call Number

The **Call number** search can be used in helping us find the full call number of a book. The full call number is not required when searching. The more you know of a particular call number the more likely you will locate the correct book. This search includes call numbers for books found at select family history centers as well as the Family History Library.

EXERCISE: We have an ancestor who lived in Barry County, Missouri. The book we want to look at is *Back to Barry*. The call number is **977.876 D2c**.

8. Film/Fiche Number

The **Film/Fiche Number** search is used to find a film or fiche by the exact number. This field does not allow for a partial search.

EXERCISE: You are researching in South Africa and want to check the status of a film that you looked at years ago. The film that you are searching for is **1795035**.

EXERCISE: You are researching John Carlton of Orange County and have found in your notes a old number. You are searching for fiche number **6125948**.